

DUNE

Without doubt, Frank Herbert's epic novel, 'Dune', remains one of the most popular science fiction stories ever told. It has sold millions of copies around the world and has since spawned five sequels, being 'Dune Messiah', 'Children of Dune', 'God Emperor of Dune', 'Heretics of Dune' and 'Chapterhouse Dune'.

'Dune' and its sequels deals with a massive concept. Set in the far flung future, the series of novels deals with the history and development of the desert planet Arrakia, also known as Dune.

Herbert goes into incredible detail building an entirely new world which despite its alien futuristic concepts, still bears a close resemblance to the concepts and historical development of Islam.

Of course writing six books covering one concept is a vast undertaking in its own right, but trying to condense much of that vast concept into one motion picture is equally a daunting task.

'Dune' was one of the most on-and-off again projects in Hollywood's recent history. Several attempts were made to transfer Herbert's novel onto the big screen, but none of the projects got past the planning stage.

It took Dino DeLaurentis, a producer made famous for his epic productions such as the remake of **'King Kong'** and **'Flash Gordon'**, to see Herbert's vision captured on celluloid.

DeLaurentis appears to have endless talent at raising money for his big budget productions, and with a budget reported to have easily exceeded \$40 million, 'Dune' remains one of the most expensive films ever made.

DeLaurentis' daughter, Raffaella, produced the massive film and the enormous task of both writing the screenplay and direction was given to an up-and-coming film maker, David Lynch, whose previous films, **'Eraser Head'** and **'The Elephant Man'**, stirred up a considerable cult following. It is interesting to note that 'Dune' was Lynch's first colour feature film, his earlier efforts being black and white.

Lynch reportedly read the novel many times and in a bid to make the film more concise and comprehensive, especially for those who have not read any of the novels, the young scriptwriter/director combined

several elements from the first three novels into the one film.

Set in the year 10,091, Arrakis is an extremely unique planet. For contained within the planet's endless seas of sand – Arrakis has no surface water nor plant life – is the spice melange.

Melange has some interesting properties. Initially it appears to be as addictive as heroin and has similar effects to an acid trip. But after prolonged use it actually extends your life span and gives you incredible powers, such as the ability to navigate throughout the universe by literally 'bending space around you'. You remain motionless whilst the universe is moved around you.

Melange has given rise to the Guild Navigators who control all interplanetary travel. The Guild, who are actual humans who are hundreds of years old and mutated by their addiction to Melange, are concerned with developments on Arrakis.

Several plants have been plotting over the planet which is currently administered by the Caladan, who are a relatively noble race. The power hungry Harkonnen successfully invade Arrakis, overthrowing the Caladans. In the ensuing battle, a young Prince, Paul Atreides and his mother are cast out into the desert to die.

Donning special suits which will keep them alive, they must face Arrakis' other claim to fame, the sandworms. Up to several kilometers in length, the sandworms are massive creatures which burrow through the sand and attack anything which disturbs the surface.

Paul and his mother, Jessica, are saved from the sandworm by the Fremen, a holy sect who live on Arrakis and dream of the day they will liberate it.

Paul brings with him the 'weirding' way and teaches the Fremen how to fight. Paul, who adopts the name Muad 'Dib, leads the Fremen against the Harkonnen. It is when Paul drinks from the sacred 'water of life' that he takes on greater powers and in effect becomes a new messiah – one who fulfills the ancient prophecy and brings new life to Arrakis.

Creating the worlds of Arrakis, Caladan and Harkonnen was no easy task. Mexico was selected as the principal location for

Arrakis. It was vital that Lynch captured the over-powering grandure of Arrakis' endless dune seas.

Equally vital were the massive sets. Whether they be the Emperor's grand palace, the frightening and bleak Harkonnen, or the overwhelming caverns set deep within Arrakis, the art direction was a major integral part of the overall film.

Of course all of the visual splendour is of little use within the human element and 'Dune' boasts some fairly impressive casting. Making his film debut is young Kyle MacLachlan, who plays Paul. Other notable names include Jurgen Prochnow (The Boat and The Keep), Max Von Sydow, Sting (from the rock group, The Police), Francesca Annis, Jose Ferrer, Lily Langtree and Kenneth McMillan. Freddie Jones (The Elephant Man) also has a minor role in the film which was reported to be at David Lynch's insistence. DeLaurentis was so overjoyed with Jones that the actor is now appearing in DeLaurentis' latest films such as **'Firestarter'**.

Frank Herbert, when visiting Australia for a science fiction convention which was held in Adelaide in 1982, spoke of the movie which was then in its infancy. Since then, Herbert worked on the film as technical adviser and has been reported to have maintained his enthusiasm for DeLaurentis' production.

Like the original novel, the film is set to give rise to further sequels. All of the principal cast were signed on to make three films, though at this stage there have been no details made available concerning the shooting of the next film.

Herbert himself is reported to be busy on the seventh and possibly last 'Dune' novel.

All of this arose when Herbert was asked to do an article on a U.S. Department of Agriculture project on controlling sand dunes. With Herbert mulling over the idea of returning to both travelling around and journalism, who knows what other concepts are waiting in this man's mind.

Sting, from the famous rock group, The Police, stars in Dino DeLaurentis' latest, sci-fi, epic, 'Dune'.

